

In Good Hands: State Apprenticeship Programs
in Folk & Traditional Arts



*Cover: Hands of Elizabeth Schiff,
master, German beaded baby
cap making, North Dakota.*

**Since 1983, nearly 3,000 master artists in
42 states and three U.S. territories have
teamed up with apprentices to pass on the
arts of their cultural heritage.**

*Opposite: Minnie Ka'awaloa, master (R),
Laurie Hera, apprentice, lauhala
weaving/hat making, Hawai'i.*

In Good Hands: State Apprenticeship Programs in Folk & Traditional Arts



National Endowment for the Arts 1996

I'm sure now that my daughter, Alice, will make baskets of white oak and sedge grass and bottom chairs. I really don't believe she would have started had we not got involved with this program . . . Thank you for not letting this part of my life die, but to grow and keep on keeping on. I want to leave it in somebody's hands and I would like it to be her.

Azzie Roland
Master basketmaker
Louisiana



**Quilting in Kansas. Chinese
opera in New York. Hispanic
santos carving in Colorado.
Hide tanning in Alaska.**

Around the country,
state apprenticeship
programs in the folk
and traditional arts are
helping people to

“keep on keeping on” with the cherished traditions of their community. The programs, usually sponsored by a state arts council, bring a master artist together with a committed apprentice for intensive instruction in a traditional craft or performing art. Artist teams apply for grants to pay for supplies, teaching time, and apprentice travel. A panel selects participants based on criteria such as artistic quality and feasibility of study plan. Master and apprentice work together on a project that often culminates in a public presentation or a continuing partnership.

*Ernest Murray, master (L),
Steve Cookson, apprentice, Ozark
johnboat paddlemaking, Missouri.*

I've been searching for a teacher for years and she is the one. Auntie Jane [Lily Jane Ako Nunies] believes that if you have a gift, you must pass it on.

Donna Lee Cockett, apprentice lauhala weaver, Hawai'i

Apprenticeships have a ripple effect that is felt far beyond the artist pair and long after the end of the grant period.

Artists build skills and confidence while gaining new recognition and opportunities.

Communities enjoy positive publicity and affirm the value of their cultural her-

itage. **Sponsor agencies** reach out to underserved populations and enrich

their programming. **Art forms** that might have disappeared find a new lease on

life with a younger generation.

*Bonnie Chatavong, master (L),
Line Saysamondouangdy, apprentice,
Laotian weaving, Hawai'i.*



Diversity and Economy

Nationwide, most apprenticeships focus on crafts among ethnic minorities, with American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Asian/Pacific Islander Americans especially well-represented;

Anglo and European Americans make up 39% of participants. Teams are widely dispersed across and within U.S. states and territories, from inner-city Detroit to rural Mississippi to village Guam. Each program sets its own priorities and selection criteria according to local needs. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Folk & Traditional Arts Program has provided major funding for

**Apprenticeship programs
serve an impressive diversity
of people, art forms,
and geographic regions.**

state apprenticeship programs since 1983, supporting 34 out of 38 active programs in 1995. Program grant budgets (\$10,000-\$30,000) and typical awards (\$1,000-\$2,500 per team) have remained stable over the years.

Opposite: Edith "Baby Edwards" Hunt, master (L), Germaine Ingram, apprentice, African American tap dance, Pennsylvania.

Bronius Krokys, master (L), Joseph Kasinskas, apprentice, Lithuanian folksinging, Pennsylvania.





The apprenticeship program has a great impact on a rural state like this. We've done a lot to recognize the diversity of North Dakota people, many of whom were never recognized before.

Mary Louise Defender-Wilson (Dakota-Hidatsa)
Master storyteller, panelist
Member, North Dakota
Council on the Arts





Intimate Conservatories

More than lessons in technical skills, apprenticeships are per-

sonal and cultural relationships—what one observer calls “intimate conservatories.” Masters pass on stories, lore, and language along with “tricks of the trade” and the finer points of style. “You weave slowly so you can hear more stories,” says one apprentice. “What I most treasure is gaining a friend,” writes another. The results of apprenticeships are as varied as the artists and art forms involved. In Florida, an apprentice learned 30 old-time fiddle tunes and now performs with her teacher. In Colorado, an apprentice started a class in santos carving at a vocational school. In Massachusetts and Oregon, apprentice singers were trained to officiate at Hmong weddings. In American

Fred Dolan, master (L), Shawn Gillis, apprentice, duck decoy carving, New Hampshire.

Opposite: Shoba Sharma, master (center), apprentices Samhitha Udupa (L) and Anitha Seth (R), Indian Bharathanatyam classical dance, Pennsylvania.

Samoa, a team built a traditional house bound with 130 miles of coconut fiber.



Ola Belle [Reed] shared her banjo style, her incredible repertoire, her life history and her family history, her political and religious outlooks and her recipes, her famous chicken soup, and her strength of mountain-bred character.

Judy Marti
Apprentice banjo player
Pennsylvania

Awards and Rewards

Apprenticeships often lead to state, local, and national

awards for master artists, including the prestigious National Heritage Fellowship.

Some programs arrange annual receptions at the state capitol; others sponsor traveling exhibits, media documentaries, or school residencies to showcase artists.

Publicity and acclaim often bring artists new invitations to present, sell, or teach their art. Yet the greatest reward for many comes from mentoring an

apprentice. "It gives me much satisfaction when I have created something beautiful, durable, and

useful," writes master quilter Mary Ann Norton of Mississippi, "and even more satisfaction and

pleasure when I have

helped someone else

to learn how."

The apprenticeship gave me back some things I'd almost forgotten because nobody had asked me about it for so long.

Charlie Smith, master old-time fiddler, Mississippi



Above left: Eva Castellanoz, master Mexican American wax corona maker and National Heritage Fellowship recipient (center), with daughter/ apprentice Erika Castellanoz (L), present gift to Governor Barbara Roberts at the Oregon state capitol.

Above right: Peggy Langley, then apprentice (L), with Rex Cook, master, saddlemaking, North Dakota.



From Apprentice to Master Saddlemaker

Peggy Langley started making saddles for the horses on her family's North Dakota ranch in 1986, following book instructions and her own intuition. She tried asking cowboys for advice but found them unwilling to share their trade secrets with a woman. When the state folk arts coordinator called in 1991 to ask if she'd like to be part of a saddlemaking apprenticeship, "I thought it was a joke," Langley recalls. She convinced veteran saddlemaker Rex Cook to take

her on. "He really put me through the paces," she says. "I learned I was doing everything right; I just needed more finesse and some shortcuts to make the work easier." The apprenticeship bolstered Langley's confidence and moved her to open her own saddlery. "When you make that first big cut into the leather, it's intimidating. Now I

can do that part in a day," she reports. With more orders than she can handle and an apprentice of her own, even the rodeo cowboys are impressed.

Peggy Langley credits the state's apprenticeship program with helping her turn a passion into a profession.

*If it wasn't for the NEA, I
wouldn't be making pottery.*

Jerry Brown
Master stoneware potter

*Everyone was hungry and
ready for [shape note
singing] schools.*

Art Deason
Master shape note singer

Every Saturday, Nora Ezell's six
apprentices gather at her home

in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, to work on a Maple Leaf quilt. A 1992 National Heritage Fellowship winner who makes vivid African American "story quilts," Ezell expects her students to "get it just so straight from the beginning." The Alabama Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program is known for its strong support of African American artists, its sponsorship of group apprenticeships, and its funding of masters like Ezell year after year.

Coordinator Joey Brackner takes pride in the program's role in revitalizing "flagship traditions" like shape note hymn singing and stoneware pottery.

Thanks in part to repeat grants and related publicity, the state boasts hundreds of community "singings" and ninth-generation potter Jerry Brown was able to return to the family craft full-time.

Focus on Alabama

*Opposite: Arlin Moon, master (center),
apprentice Tina Ray (L), Little Julie Ray, old-time fiddling.*





Focus on Hawai'i

There's a waiting list of people
who want to study lauhala

weaving with 73-year-old Minnie Ka'awaloa on the Big Island of Hawai'i. Apprentices attest to the love and lore she dispenses as she shows them how to harvest pandanus leaves or start the *piko* (center) for a woven hat. "Aunt Minnie has taken us under her wing with the culture, the language, the spirit," says Noelani Ng. It is this sense of "protocol, spirituality, and values" that Hawai'i Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program coordinator Lynn Martin aims to pass on. Though 80% Native Hawaiian, the roster also includes Cantonese opera singers, Laotian woodcarvers, and Okinawan dancers and musicians.

*Raymond Kane, master
(center), apprentices Bobby
Moderow, Jr. (L) and Harry Koizumi (R),
Hawaiian slack key guitar.*

*Hands of William
Ka'awaloa, master,
Hawaiian fishnetting.*



*It's become a real status
thing to be part of the
apprenticeship program.
Native Hawaiians took the
master artists for granted
before; now they look up
to them. It's done won-
ders for their spirit.*

**Nathan Napoka
Panelist, State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts**

They [apprentices] got to know not only the technique, but also the mentality. They got to know who they are.

Richard Martin
Master African American
tap/jazz dancer

If I go away to the army and there's someone still here to play for [Irish] ceili dances, then I've done my job.

Niall Gannon
Master Irish fiddler

One of the country's oldest and largest programs, the Mis-

souri Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program has sponsored nearly 200 teams since 1984. Participants range from Mexican American mariachi trumpeters in Kansas City to wooden johnboat builders in the Ozarks to African American gospel singers in the Bootheel region. "When you're doing an apprenticeship, you really put your best behind it because they are going to be the role models for the others," says master Irish musician Patrick Gannon. Apprentice-

*Cecil Murray, master (L),
Jon Murray, apprentice, Ozark
wooden johnboat making.*

Focus on Missouri



ships have brought long-overdue acclaim to artists like tap dance master Richard Martin, who toured with Missouri Performing Traditions and received the Missouri Arts Award. For coordinator Dana Everts-Boehm, the real sign of success is whether relationships and traditions continue after the grants end. "I'll always be coming back to help Cecil [Murray] build boats, or if I can't find another reason, just to pester him," says apprentice Steve Cookson.

*Larry McNally, master (R),
James Walsh, apprentice,
Irish button box accordion.*





Focus on North Dakota

It took a lot of visits, gifts, and respectful listening for D. Joyce

Kitson (Lakota-Hidatsa) to find someone to teach her Hidatsa bird quillwork. Only a few elders know how to prepare the thin gull feather quills to create striking designs on clothing and regalia. The North Dakota Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program gives priority to endangered art forms like this, along with Kurdish lute playing and German beaded baby cap making. "The tradition will keep on going and become part of someone's life, versus two hours of enjoyment for some audience members," explains coordinator Troyd Geist. The investment has paid off in places like Dickinson, where apprenticeships in Ukrainian embroidery, ritual bread decoration, folk dance, and *pysanky* (ritually decorated eggs) have helped fuel a cultural revival.

Hands of Angie Chruszch, master, Ukrainian pysanky.

People that are dying [elders], and their culture is dying--they're thankful to see even one person coming out to keep our traditions alive. I could be working as a secretary, but I'm choosing to do this. That's where my heart is, in tanning a hide, doing beadwork. I'd like to see projects like this expanded, not cut back.

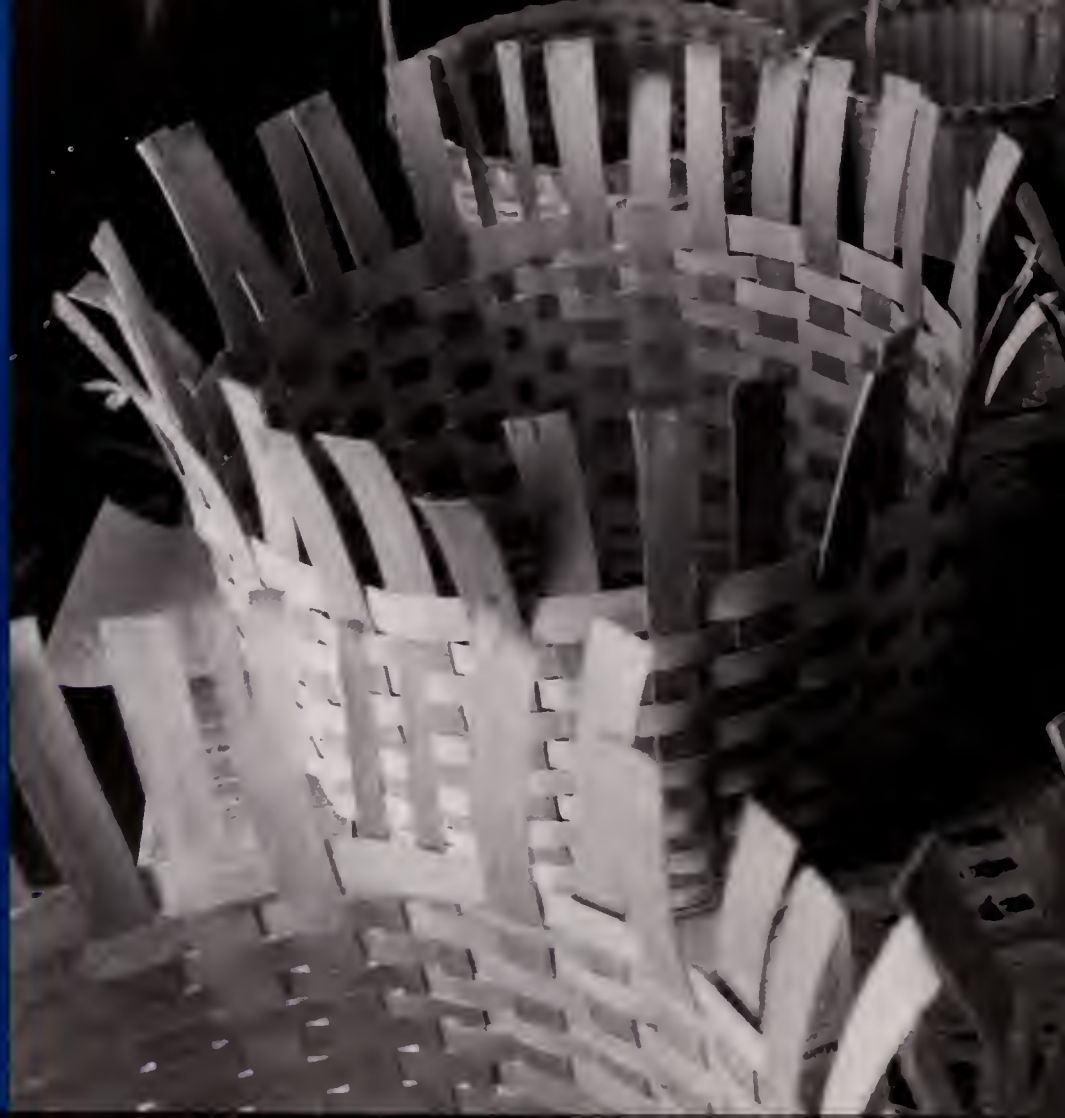
**D. Joyce Kitson
(Lakota-Hidatsa)
Master beadworker/
hidetanner
Apprentice quillworker**

In ten years of working for the tribe, I've never seen a project that has brought Indians together in this way.

Theresa Hoffman (Penobscot)
Member, Maine Arts
Commission
Director, Maine Indian
Basketmakers Alliance

If basketmaking isn't done in the household, then a kid can't learn anytime he wants to.

Richard Silliboy (Micmac)
Master basketmaker
and panelist



Focus on Maine

The first people emerged from the bark of "basket-trees" (brown ash trees), according to a Passamaquoddy creation legend. Many Maine Indians grew up with the sound of ash being pounded for baskets to sell door-to-door. But the craft was languishing when the Maine Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program was launched in 1990. Grants "gave the elders some incentive to take the time with some of the younger generation," says participant Carol Dana (Penobscot). The program also spurred the formation of a state Brown Ash Task Force to preserve the resource and the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance to advocate for artists' needs. A tradition once linked with poverty now thrives as a source of cultural pride.

*Unfinished potato
baskets by Jim Tomah.*

*Donald Sanipass of
Maine Indian Basketmakers
Alliance strips brown ash.*



*Apprenticeships are by far
our most direct and suc-
cessful way of supporting
traditional artists.*

Kathleen Mundell
Folk Arts Coordinator
Maine Arts Commission

*There's a whole body of
artistic wisdom that is
being passed on. We will
be so impoverished if we
don't have that.*

Lynn Martin
Folk Arts Coordinator
State Foundation on
Culture and the Arts,
Hawai'i

Thousands of artists
supported, hundreds
of "good news" media

**High artistic quality. Public
popularity. Cost effectiveness.**

stories, scores of vanishing traditions preserved. Apprenticeship programs appear to be in good hands. Yet with changes at the NEA and many state arts agencies, these programs face an uncertain future. They must diversify their funding and forge new partnerships to survive. In Wisconsin, master Winnebago ceremonial bowl and spoon carver Myron Lowe took care to teach apprentices "the ethics of the craft," as coordinator Richard March describes: "how to find suitable burls in the woods, how to remove them without killing the tree, and how to notch another tree in such a way that in 30 years, the tree would produce another suitable burl for a future woodcarver." With continued support, apprenticeship programs will put another notch in the tree.

*Richard Silliboy, master (R), and Valentine Pulchies, apprentice,
seek brown ash trees for Micmac Indian basketmaking, Maine.*



This booklet was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts Folk & Traditional Arts Program to The Fund for Folk Culture. For additional copies of this or the full-length report of the same title, please contact:

**Director, Folk & Traditional Arts
Heritage & Preservation Division
National Endowment for the Arts
The Nancy Hanks Center
1100 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Room 720
Washington, D.C. 20506**

Text: Susan Auerbach

Design: Leslie Baker Graphic Design

Photo Credits:

Cover, pages 9, 16: **Troyd Geist**, courtesy North Dakota Council on the Arts

Page 1: **Carl Hefner**, courtesy State Foundation on Culture and the Arts

Pages 2, 14, 15: **Dana Everts-Boehm**, courtesy Missouri Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program

Pages 3, 12, 13: **Lynn Martin**, courtesy State Foundation on Culture and the Arts

Pages 4, 5, 7: **Jane Levine**, courtesy Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission

Page 6: **Jill Linzee**, courtesy New Hampshire State Council on the Arts

Page 8: **Eliza Buck**, courtesy Oregon Folk Arts Program

Page 11: **Joey Brackner**, courtesy Alabama State Council on the Arts

Pages 18, 19, 21: **Cedric Chatterley**, courtesy Maine Arts Commission